



Manila
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AUSTRALIA

Lisa Elliston, Temporary Alternate Governor

I would like to thank the Government of the Philippines for hosting the 51st Asian Development Bank (ADB) Annual Meeting.

It is my pleasure to be here today, representing Australia on behalf of Australia's Governor, the Treasurer.

The Asia Pacific region is an engine of growth for the global economy. By 2030, Asia stands to deliver nearly two thirds of global growth.

But significant development challenges remain. There are pockets of poverty, fragility, and lagging regions in many middle and upper middle-income countries.

Developing countries in the Pacific have unique vulnerabilities based on geographic isolation, economic structure and risk of natural disasters.

The ADB is an important partner for Australia in addressing these challenges, in line with our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to highlight five priorities for Australia.

First, we consider the ADB has an important role in setting and promoting good practice standards in infrastructure financing and development in the region.

ADB projects are invaluable in building capacity and lifting national standards in project design, safeguards, procurement and life cycle asset maintenance in recipient countries.

Second, Australia encourages the ADB to continue adapting its instruments and operations to the diverse economic needs of countries in the region.

We commend the ADB for giving this due consideration in drafting Strategy 2030.

We welcome the increase in ADB financial assistance to Pacific countries, including through the Asian Development Fund.

But, we would like to see the ADB match the financial scale-up with more technical staff based in the Pacific region to support capacity building and project implementation.

The ADB also has an important role in promoting economic and regulatory reform in South East Asia.

Australia considers the ADB could do more to offer well-designed policy-based loans for promoting structural reform, strengthening governance, boosting productivity and improving the mobilisation of domestic resources.

Third, we urge the ADB to continue to develop new ways to catalyse private sector investment.

Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper acknowledges the ADB's guidance on the infrastructure shortfall of around USD26 trillion in the Asia-Pacific out to 2030, including USD46 billion in the Pacific.

ADB infrastructure projects have great potential to engage private sector finance – but ADB needs to do more to leverage commercial co-financing to help bridge the infrastructure financing gap that the ADB has highlighted.

We would like to see more ADB partnerships with institutional investors, including through third party funds, to better channel private finance into developing country infrastructure.

We would also like the ADB to take more risk in its private sector operations and expand operations in frontier markets.

Fourth, Australia would like to see the ADB take a stronger leadership role on gender quality: the ADB should do much more to advance women's economic empowerment, by opening paths to employment in better paying, higher skilled jobs.

Finally, we encourage the ADB to continue to work closely with other multilateral development banks and multilateral forums, including the G20.

Improved cooperation and coordination will maximise its comparative strengths and lead to better development outcomes.

Australia is committed to improved international economic governance and to supporting institutions, such as the ADB, which are crucial to enabling an open, outward-looking regional economy and resilient Indo Pacific.

Thank you for your kind attention.